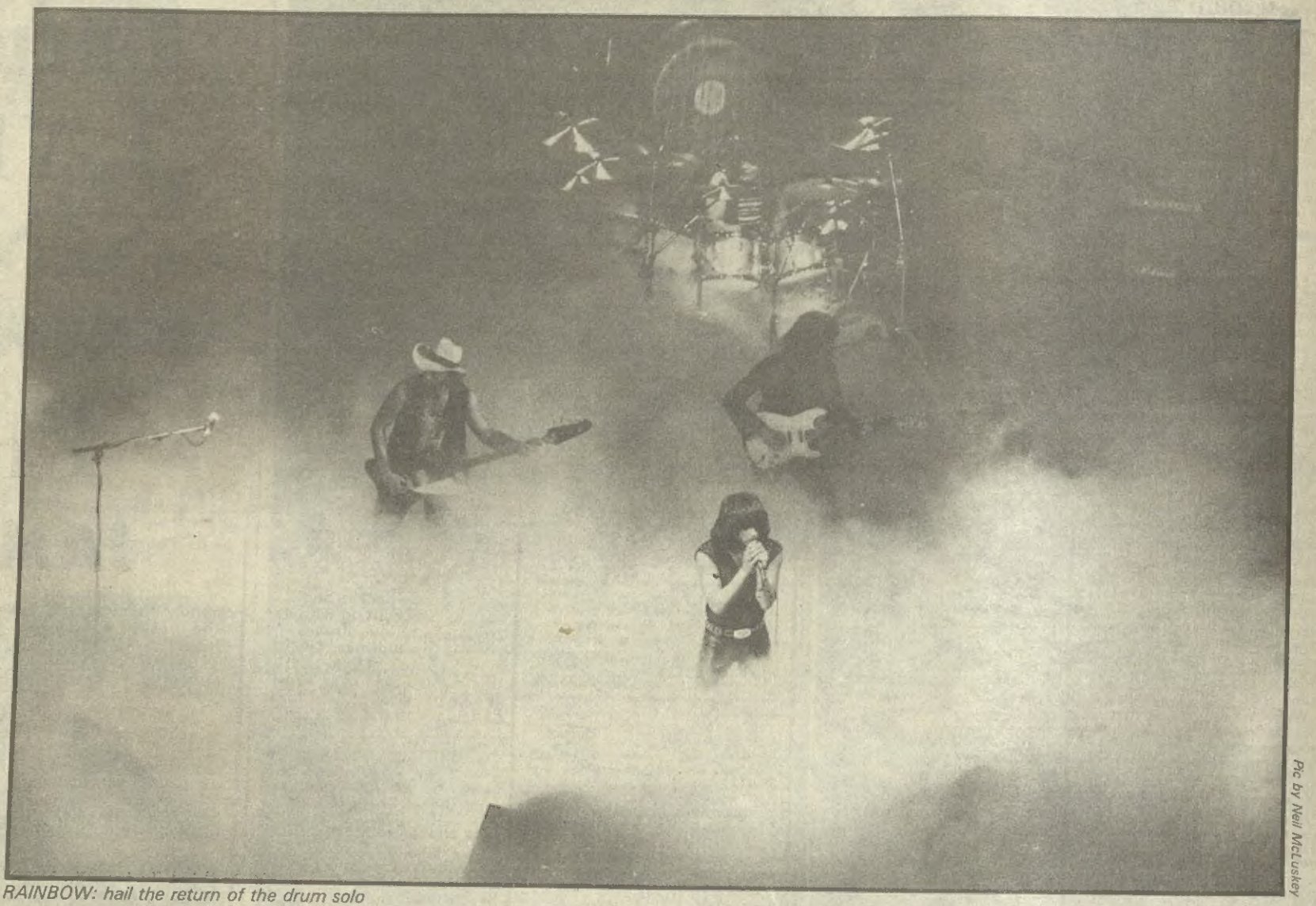
ON THE ROAD

Rainbow/ Rose Tattoo
Rainbow

Rainbow Wow! Wow!



Pic by Neil McLuskey

RAINBOW: hail the return of the drum solo

UPWARDS of 7,000 bedenimed and hairy Londoners beseiged the semi-seatless art-deco theatre for this, the capital debut of Ritchie Blackmore's sixth Rainbow arrangement in as many years.

Since their inception, the self-appointed supergroup have been fair game for full-bodied slaggings from both sides of the critical rock 'n' roll fence. In the past, both the press and the punters have given the band a hard time. But let's be honest. Five minutes before lift-off and my mind is completely open, working at maximum unbiased capacity and, moreover, brimming with wholehearted enthusiasm.

Support band Rose Tattoo had served their purpose. Anderson had gotten angry and hollered: "We're here to warm you up — so get warmed up! Do you want me to get the sack?"

The real action began with the Rainbow intro tape, the traditional pomp of 'Land Of Hope And Glory' booming from the gargantuan sound system. And I do mean BOOMING.

28,000 fingers (think about it) poke the humid, smokey air and the sweetie-pie li'l voice of Judy Garland (is she getting any royalties?) informs us that she's "got a feeling we're not in Kansas any more. We must be over the Rainbow-Rainbow-Rainbow . . ." in time-honoured fashion. 14,000 eyes (see?) focus onto the stage, which explodes into activity on cue. There're blinding flashpots, billows of atmospheric see-oh-two, a rising backdrop subsiding then rising again (deliberate?) and sufficient lightbulbage to illuminate Blackpool strand.

The strains of 'Spotlight Kid' pump hot ears with the subtlety of a hydraulic drill and, oh yes, somewhere in the senses-shattering fracas, five musicians have taken to the boards. Fail with an opening like that? No chance.

But what of these musicians? Blackmore, of course, sporting a fine line in Liberace cabaret-wear and clutching his white Strat (trademark), just makes it look too Goddamned easy. Nevertheless, during the course of the show, no less than five times did we have to stand and admire his undeniable mastery of the instrument. Over 25 minutes in total! Did we need it? OK, so champagne bottles can double as capos, guitar leads as violin bows, and two digits is all he needs anyway, but frankly I'd rather be listening to 'Stargazer', 'Gates Of Babylon', 'Midtown Tunnel Vision' or any other of the numerous Rainbow songs omitted from the set.

Don Airey's keyboard ramble interpolated into a dreadful 'Can't Happen Here' (I wish it hadn't). It was tedious and uninspiring, neither stimulating nor exciting.

But halfway through a satisfactory rendition of 'Lost In Hollywood' came a bolt from the blue — Bobby Rondinelli's drum solo. Visions of boredom were left in tatters by roll after roll of breakneck velocity, always rhythmic, sticks being dispensed with and bounced out into the hands of souvenir-hungry punters. I'm sure he had mighty sore mitts afterwards — in the immortal words of the dove-eater: "Flash American bastard".

I refrain from heaping similar praise on the other defendant in tonight's trial, singer Joe Lynn Turner, 'cos I didn't like the guy. A voice he has — but not a Rainbow voice. Neither is his stagecraft worthy of Blackmore's confidence.

Otherwise — a well-presented 'Love's No Friend', and entertaining stabs at the hit singles. 'Long Live' was a highly successful crowd participation number, 'I Surrender' worked well enough, and 'All Night Long' and 'Since You've Been Gone' were the first two encores. The show climaxed with a rave from the grave entitled 'Croak On The Daughter' (Are you sure? — Ed.)

No guitar trashed (groan). No more encores (moan). No chairs to smash (drat). Exit.

PHILIP BELL